



Environmental Committee

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Sustainability Course Position Statement

By: Environmental Committee

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Position Statement:

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council supports legislation requiring sustainability courses to be taught to children in primary education.

Position

It is the position of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, the voice of the Iowa's youth, that environmental preservation and sustainability should be implemented into the curriculum of children in their primary education to educate the future generations on climate change, global warming, and sustainability, in an effort to protect the earth.

Rationale

Every year, billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere causing a never-ending increase in temperatures throughout the world. Especially in the past decade, climate change has made its way into everyone's lives whether it's through the devastating forest fires impacting the West Coast of the United States, or the unpredictable changes in weather affecting farming and industrial jobs. There will be irreversible consequences that will happen due to humans polluting our earth unless action is taken.

Sustainability and climate change are important for people of all age groups but teaching the younger Iowan population is especially necessary. Many students are not taught the effects of climate change until they are in upper middle school to early high school which often creates biases. Older students often create biases through the opinions of their classmates and their role models before fact checking much of the information. In a 2019 survey conducted by Yale University's program on climate change communication, only 69% of U.S. citizens stated a belief that climate change is a present issue. The study also found that only 4 out of 10 Americans believe that they directly feel the effects of climate change. This number is only going to rise in the upcoming future. The only way to change the direction of climate change is to educate children about climate change without them having any partisan bias that may cloud their judgment. It is very concerning how little climate change is discussed in schools and homes throughout the country. About 6 out of 10 Americans rarely discuss climate change in a personal setting

and many say that climate change is not a prevalent issue at the moment. Climate change will burden the youth of today and they will be forced to and responsible for reversing careless choices made by the generations before us.

Currently, Iowa is feeling many of the negative effects of climate change. There have been increases in precipitation and temperature which has caused many negative consequences throughout Iowa. Since 1998, there has been an overall 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit increase in Iowa while Northwest Iowa has seen the greatest increase in temperature at 1.67 degrees Fahrenheit. Due to the temperature increases, there has been a higher rate at which convection storms can damage many cities throughout Iowa. Due to the increase in precipitation, there have been increases in flooding in many areas throughout Iowa. With these high rates of precipitation and temperature increases, one of Iowa's largest industries is being negatively affected. Farming has always been a central part of Iowa, but now due to climate change farming has become much more difficult. Increases in precipitation have caused soil erosion. Soil erosion moves a lot of the nutritious topsoil, while temperature increases have caused some crops from growing properly which leads to reduced production which is bad for our economy.

Teaching young children not only about sustainability but also about soil conservation, water quality, and erosion control may encourage the youth to stay in Iowa and help decrease the effects of climate change on agriculture. The number of farmers in Iowa has been steadily decreasing for many years. The number of family-owned farms also has been decreasing for a long time due to the lack of young people being interested in farming. Educating children about agriculture along with sustainability practice will not only help raise an environmentally aware generation but hopefully create possible future generations of farmers for Iowa.

Recommended Action

If this position statement is officially supported by SIYAC and the Department of Education, sustainability practices and topics on climate change will be taught to children in primary schools. The State of Iowa and Iowa Public School Boards have an obligation to educate the youth on subjects that will affect the state, the country, and the world. It is necessary to teach students accurate facts about climate change and teach them from an early age to engage in more sustainable practices to ensure that our future will not be damaged because of global warming and climate change. The curriculum will need to foster an appreciation for nature among children so that they implement sustainable practices in their lives.

Taking small steps to educate children from an early age will inform them on important environmental issues without the introduction of other biases they may develop during adolescence. Anything from discussions about climate change in the classroom to teaching young children how to reduce, reuse, and recycle will allow these children to grow up with more insight on climate change unlike previous generations. Along with discussions about climate change, Iowa educators should include examples of how climate change is affecting Iowans and Iowan economy to make better connections with young individuals. With the introduction of supplementary lessons on climate change, there will hopefully be an increase in interest of the agricultural industry in Iowa.

Regards,

Environmental Committee
State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council

Sources

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